

San Francisco Chronicle

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The Electronic Traffic Court

L.A. kiosks accept credit cards

Newsday

Los Angeles

It may be irritating enough paying a traffic or parking fine, but at least Los Angeles is providing an alternative to waiting in long lines to pay them — even if some violators will wind up paying 18 percent annual interest on their fines.

Beginning in about two weeks, motorists ticketed for moving violations or parking infractions in Los Angeles County will be able to step up to one of two 24-hour "AutoClerk" kiosks near a courthouse in Long Beach, slip a Visa or MasterCard into a machine and charge the fine to their accounts.

Motorists will also be able to pay with automated teller machine cards or by check and will be able to plead not guilty and obtain an appearance date, said Paul Kennedy, vice president of software development for North Communications, the Los Angeles company that designed the system.

Under a separate project also involving North, Los Angeles city violators will be able to charge their fines via an automated telephone system, perhaps as soon as next month, Kennedy said.

The idea is to reduce the burden on county employees who now collect the fines and to speed things up for motorists who sometimes stand in long lines to pay. Ultimately, Kennedy says, the plan is to install the machines in all 28 of the county's municipal courthouses and maybe some other convenient locations, such as shopping centers.

EXHIBIT